

VZCZCXRO2636
PP RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHRY #0583/01 2661624
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 231624Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4071
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000583

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [GV](#)
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTRY RESPONDS TO CONCERNS ABOUT
DIPLOMATIC SECURITY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. In response to diplomats' growing concerns about the security situation in Conakry, the Minister of Foreign Affairs organized a meeting on September 18. He outlined a number of actions the GoG plans to take to address these concerns, but the audience seemed largely unconvinced. In addition to concern for the personal safety of their diplomats, Ambassadors also expressed concern for the safety of their countries' citizens. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) The Guinean Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexandre Cece Loua, convoked members of the diplomatic corps to a meeting on September 18 to discuss growing security concerns. The Moroccan Ambassador, as the dean of the dip corp, had formally expressed the community's concerns after a series of security incidents, which included an attack on the Ghanaian Ambassador (reftel). A/DCM represented the USG at the meeting.

¶3. (SBU) In his opening remarks, Minister Loua condemned the threatening activities and assured the dip corp that the Guinean Government is taking the matter seriously. Accompanied by senior colleagues from the Ministries of Security and High Crimes and Banditry, Minister Loua outlined the following measures to be undertaken by the GoG:

- the revitalization of the anti-crime brigade assigned for diplomatic security
- the establishment of a emergency "hotline" to be used by members of the dip corp to contact police officials directly
- the organization of an information campaign, to include the use of local media, targeting military and "para-military" forces in the capital regarding diplomatic privileges and immunities
- arrests and prosecutions of perpetrators of crimes against members of the diplomatic community
- the immediate dismissal of any military personnel found to be involved in crimes against the diplomatic community

¶4. (SBU) The diplomatic corps generally expressed appreciation for the Minister's efforts, but emphasized that they are looking for results. The French Ambassador pointed out that the emergency hotline was already in existence, but rarely functioned while the anti-crime brigade lacked the equipment and resources needed to respond effectively. The Director of the Police acknowledged these criticisms, but said that the phone line will be fully operational and the anti-crime brigade fully equipped. However, Minister Loua intervened and admitted that the brigade is short two vehicles, which he used as a platform to ask the diplomatic community to assist with filling this gap.

¶5. (SBU) Several diplomats (including the Ambassadors of China, South Africa, Japan, and Senegal) emphasized that the GoG should be focused not only on security for diplomats, but also security for foreigners in general, as well as Guinean citizens. Using highly diplomatic but pointed language, the South African Ambassador told the Minister that the state has

a responsibility to protect its citizens, and that this task becomes particularly problematic when the state itself is implicated in criminal activities. "No organ of the state should be superior to another, nor to the people," he stated.

Using roadblocks as an example, the Ambassador added that the police should have total autonomy over law enforcement issues. "The military's job is to protect citizens from invasion...not engaging in anti-crime initiatives," he said.

¶6. (SBU) The Senegalese Ambassador stated that Senegalese citizens are being specifically targeted as retaliation for seemingly pro-Dadis comments made by Senegalese President Wade a few weeks ago, which she claimed were misunderstood. "There are 10,000 Senegalese in Guinea and 3,000 Guineans in Senegal...if our citizens are not protected here, I cannot guarantee what will happen on our side," she said.

¶7. (SBU) One of the last speakers to stand up was the Malaysian Ambassador, who was visibly emotional. He relayed how a group of soldiers accompanied by a number of civilians had recently broken into his private residence. They broke through the entry gate and then demanded that they be allowed to search the premises. When the Ambassador explained his diplomatic status, the soldiers reportedly told him "you are not in Malaysia, you are in Guinea and all these houses belong to Guineans." They then forced their way into the residence, breaking some personal items and vandalizing the walls by painting them.

¶8. (SBU) Minister Loua essentially listened to the complaints and concerns, but offered little substantive response. With respect to the incident at the Malaysian

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Ambassador's residence, he commented only "we have received your complaint and regret that it happened, but you have to understand that these people are not educated...they do not know what an Ambassador is and these are the kinds of challenges we are dealing with.8

COMMENT

¶9. (SBU) Although the Minister seemed to be making an effort to address security concerns, the assembled diplomats did not look convinced. As A/DCM got up to leave, the British Ambassador whispered tongue in cheek "well now, don't we all feel safer?" Diplomatic security was clearly a concern, but Ambassadors were equally concerned about the security of their citizens, an issue to which the Minister did not at all speak. END COMMENT.

BROKENSHIRE